

Chase Creek Railroad Bridge  
Clifton Townsite  
East of Frisco Street at Chase Creek  
Clifton  
Greenlee County  
Arizona

HABS No. AZ-176

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PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Western Region  
Department of the Interior  
San Francisco, California 94107

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

CHASE CREEK RAILROAD BRIDGE

HABS No. AZ-176

**Location:**

Clifton Townsite, East of Frisco Street at Chase Creek, Clifton, Greenlee County, Arizona

**Significance:**

Associated with railroad transportation and the development of Clifton.

**Description:**

The Chase Creek Railroad Bridge is constructed of steel members supported at each end by a concrete and stone abutment and retaining wall. The steel beams which support the span are built up from plates and other steel shapes rivetted together. The depth of the member varies, being greater at the center of the span than at the ends. Wooden railroad ties make up the top surface of the bridge. Rails have been removed. Steel guard rails are placed on each side.

**History:**

This short single-span steel and wood railroad bridge was constructed in 1901 when the Arizona and New Mexico Railway converted to standard gauge track. It was constructed by the A&P Roberts Co. using steel supplied by the Pencord Iron Works of Pencord, Pennsylvania, one of several bridge contractors who worked on the rail improvement project. The bridge is located where Chase Creek empties into the San Francisco River.<sup>1</sup>

In order to accommodate increased traffic to and from Clifton, the parent company of the A&NM Railway, the Arizona Copper Company, decided to expand its rail operations after the turn of the century. Accordingly, in 1901 the Arizona and New Mexico converted its narrow gauge system to standard gauge. At that time a spur line was constructed along the North Clifton Road and across Chase Creek. This spur line went in the direction of ore bins located in North Clifton where ore from the New England Copper Co. was transferred for transportation to the smelter. In 1903 the Clifton Consolidated Copper Company of Arizona, Ltd. merged with the New England Copper Co. to form the New England and Clifton Copper Co. Early in 1906 the New England and Clifton Copper Co. constructed a 20-inch baby gauge line as the San Francisco River Railroad. The 20-inch line terminated at the ore bins and the Company used wagon teams to transfer the ore to the A&NM line. Following the flood of 1906, on December 12, 1906, Delbert M. Potter and his associates incorporated the Clifton Northern Railroad Company and reconstructed the rails across the bridge. By August of 1907 the Clifton Northern had laid 1,000 feet of track from the Arizona and New Mexico turntable north across the Chase Creek railroad bridge and into North Clifton. In 1908 control of the railroad was transferred to the Shannon Copper Co. which operated it until 1919 when the company ceased operations. Soon thereafter, the track was removed but the bridge remains.<sup>2</sup>

**Sources (endnotes):**

1. Copper Era December 6, 1906 (I, 1: 1-6); builder information taken from builder's plaque on the bridge by Clifton Town Manager Mark Fooks.
2. David F. Myrick, Railroads of Arizona: Volume 3, Rails and Copper Mines: Clifton, Morenci, Metcalf (Glendale, CA: Trans-Anglo Books, 1984), pp. 208-219.

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